

### **A revealing survey refutes the bogus stereotype of hunters as enemies of environmental protection and government regulation of public lands**

Hunters have something in common with their prey: They're being hunted. They're being tracked by enemies of hunting while at the same time being pursued by purported friends of hunting seeking to use them to advance their own agendas.

It was reported last week that a hunter who registered one of the first kills in the inaugural wolf-hunting season in northern Wisconsin was getting threats from hunting foes.

No doubt the threats were anonymous—who would attach their name to such idiocy? It's true that in a newspaper photo the wolf, which at 72 pounds was smaller than your average golden retriever, didn't look as fierce as an Ozaukee County coyote, but shooting timber wolves is now legal, blessed by the Department of Natural Resources and approved by some environmental experts as needed population control.

Meanwhile, self-proclaimed hunting supporters have been exploiting the image of the noble nimrod for purposes other than protecting wildlife habitat and the hunting ethic.

A staple of the campaign to prevent, limit or roll back gun control measures has been selling the fear that gun laws would somehow take the shotguns and deer rifles out of the hands of hunters, never mind that no such law has ever been proposed in the U.S.

Opponents of government environmental protection efforts and regulation of public lands frequently cite hunters as allies, perhaps because hunters are perceived as politically conservative.

Zealots in both areas of contention might be surprised at what hunters really feel about these issues. The results of a respected national survey reported in September shed revealing light on the American sportsman.

The poll, conducted for the National Wildlife Federation, surveyed registered voters who were hunters and fisherman. It found that:

Sixty percent of those surveyed said conservation is as important or more important than gun rights.

By a margin of 49% to 35%, respondents believe that public lands should be protected as natural areas rather than be used for oil, coal or gas production.

Seventy-nine percent want Clean Water Act protection restored to wetlands and waterways

## Hunters as environmentalists

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to protect human health and wildlife habitat.

Sixty-six percent believe America has a moral responsibility to deal with global warming and 69% want the U.S. to reduce carbon emissions that contribute to warming.

What should we take away from this? Here's the view of Theodore Roosevelt IV, descendant of one of America's great hunter-conservationists: "The nation's fishermen and hunters are in the front line of our field naturalists. Doing what they love best, they see firsthand the impact of climate change on natural systems and our wildlife. . . . hunters believe we have a moral responsibility to act as stewards to pass on to our children's children our magnificent public lands and waters."

And those who choose to view hunters as Bambi killers and ruthless eradicators of once-endangered species, as well as others who take for granted that hunters will march in lockstep with conservative political dogma concerning environmental protections and use of public lands, should learn from the survey that their hunter stereotype doesn't match reality.

And we should all be encouraged that a majority of those who venture into the outdoors in pursuit of their hunting and fishing passions understand the need to take care of the environment and our still natural lands and waters.